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More on the Generation of Tones from Registers

Tim Friberg, Barbara Friberg, Richard Pittman

1. Khmer two-register words may be compared with Vietnamese cognates in an attempt to write rules which explain how a tone language is related to a register language. It is alleged (Purtle 68, 69, 70, Pittman 70, 72, Pittman and Jessie Glover 70, Warren Glover 72) that tone languages may be derived from register languages, and that the two-register option for each syllable of a three-syllable word-base gives a maximum of eight tones, as realized in many of the tone languages of Asia. Except for the irregularities resulting from orthographical traditions and loan-word complications, Khmer and Vietnamese constitute a good pair of languages for testing the claim.

2. In order to do this Khmer must be written with the two registers consistently distinguished, and the rules by which certain Khmer consonants are dominant and others recessive must be given. Not all Khmer romanizations are designed to make the register contrasts immediately and easily apparent to a reader. The Fribergs, by writing a single quote before second-register consonants, have made the contrast clear for this paper. The rules of dominance below are from Purtle 68 and form the basis for the formulas given on the Khmer-Vietnamese cognates list. Unfortunately

the rules appear to be incomplete, especially for three-^{67.}
syllable word-bases, which is part of the reason that some
of the formulas are incomplete.

3. Chart of Khmer consonants, organized for appli-
cation of rules of dominance (below).

<u>A</u> (1st register)		<u>B</u> (2nd register)	
1	k, kh c, ch t, th d ph b	'k, 'kh 'c, 'ch 't, 'th 'p, 'ph	1
2	l n s h q	'l 'n ñ ng m y w r	2

Rules of consonantal dominance in Khmer (adapted from
Purtle '68):

A + A = A

B + B = B

A1 + B1 = whichever is second in cluster

B1 + A2 = B

A1, A2 + B2 = A

4. Vietnamese-Khmer Cognates (presumed) with accompanying register formulas 68.

English	VN	Khmer	formula
1. four	bốn	bư'n	A1 B2 gives A
2. new	mới	th'mơy	A1 B2 = A
3. banana	chuối	cêik	A1 A1 = A
4. cut	cắt	kăt	A1 A1 = A
5. water	nước	'tũk	B2 A1 = A
6. fruit	trái	phlăy	A1 2 B2 = A
7. grandchild	cháu	căw	A1 B2 = A
8. hair	tóc	sak	A2 A1 = A
9. lead	lá	slok	A2 2 A1 = A
10. salt	muối	qa'mbơ'l	B2 A1 B2 A
11. crossbow	ná	snăă	A2 2 = A
12. yawn	ngáp	s'ngăăb	A2 B2 A1 = A
13. remember	nhớ		
14. be tight	riết	'rut	B2 A1 = A
15. hiccough	nấc	tqăđk	A1 A2 A1 = A
16. whistle	húyt	huoc	A2 A1 = A
17. burn	đốt	dôt	A1 A1 = A
18. nose	mũi	c'ra'môh	B2 A2
19. mosquito	muỗi	'muus	B2 A2
20. chua	chua		
21. root	rễ	'rus	B2 B2 = B
22. store	tiệm	't8ơ'm	B1 B2 = B
23. one	một	'muơ'y	B2 B2 = B
24. straight	Thẳng	t'ra'ng	A1 B2 B2

English	VN	Khmer	formula
25. hand	tay	dăy	A1 2
26. carabao	trâu	k'rabơy	A1 B2 A1 B2
27. three	ba	bơy	A1 2
28. around	chung quanh	'cu'm'wư'ñ	B1 B2 B2 B2
29. not	không	kô'm	A1 B2 = A
30. eat (H)	sơi	săo'y	B1 B2 = B
31. to go	đi	'tuw	B1 B2 = B
32. deep	sâu	'c'ruw	B1 B2 B2 = B
33. year	năm	chnă'm	A1 A2 B2
34. delicious	ngon	ch'ngă'ñ	A1 B2 B2
35. stretch	căng	kăă'ng	A1 B2
36. increase	thêm	thăê'm	A1 B2 = A
37. child	con	kou'n	A1 B2 = A
38. leg	xương	'cơ'ng	B1 B2 = B
39. ngai	th'ngăy		A1 B2 B2
40. happy	vui	săbbăă'y	A2 A1 A1 B2
41. mango	soài	s'wăă'y	A2 B2 B2
42. cage	chuồng	't'ru'ng	B1 B2 B2
43. store	hàng	hăă'ng	A2 B2 = A
44. skinny	còm	s'koo'm	A2 B1 B2
45. mosquito net	màn	'mu'ng	B2 B2 = B
46. alms	tiền	'tiơ'n	B1 B2 = B
47. circle	vòng	'wư'ng	B2 B2 = B

5. Note on incompleteness and summary. Because the Fribergs were not available for consultation at the time this paper was mimeographed, full interpretation of the underlined (presumably neutral) consonants in the Khmer list is not given. Also the sample is insufficient for some of the tone classes. Enough of a beginning has been made, however, to give the reader an idea of the direction in which the paper will go. It should ultimately be possible to generalize for each VN tone class, as it is in this paper for the high class, is always the result of a combination of Khmer consonants which give A (1st) register.

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